

Congressman Panetta on the 2018 Farm Bill

Dear Friends,

This year, Congress is working to pass the next Farm Bill.

As a member of the House Agriculture Committee, I have the unique and important opportunity to help craft this bill. My focus is on the needs of our district, including investments in research and specialty crops, support for our conventional and organic growers, and strengthening the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and our rural communities.

The 2018 Farm Bill – Priorities for the central coast of California

Research

Innovation is key to the success of our thriving agriculture industry. I will support efforts to strengthen both basic and applied agriculture research to improve crop varieties, pest management, and soil health.

Mechanization

Our labor force is aging and shrinking. Strategic investments in the development of specialty crop mechanization are critical to our continued competitiveness and the future success of our agriculture industry.

Organic

The Central Coast is home to a thriving organic industry. I am supporting robust funding for the National Organic Program and for organic research efforts. I am also working to protect the industry from fraudulent organic imports.

Nutrition

A successful farm bill benefits all consumers, not just farmers. I will continue to work with my colleagues on the Nutrition subcommittee to help expand access to the fresh fruits and vegetables grown in our district. Together, we can ensure that the products grown on the Central Coast are accessible to everyone.

Rural Development

When our rural communities thrive, we all benefit. To support our vibrant small towns, I am working to expand housing opportunities, grow businesses, and increase access to broadband.

Trade

In addition to advocating for a successful NAFTA renegotiation, I am pushing for increased market access through Farm Bill programs. By reducing trade barriers, producers can fully capitalize on export markets.

Conservation

Producers on the Central Coast understand the critical importance of conservation. I am working to ensure that they have access to capital and technical assistance to integrate these practices into their management practices.

Forest Management

The Central Coast is no stranger to the threat of wildfire. Protecting our communities begins by investing in forest health. I am working to improve how the U.S. Forest Service manages local forests and protects property.

February Highlights:

I am already working with colleagues on both sides of the aisle to advocate for Central Coast agriculture.

- This week, I joined my colleagues on the House Agriculture Committee in sending a [letter to the House Budget Committee](#) calling for no cuts to our Committee's budget as we craft the 2018 Farm Bill. Further cuts to the Ag Committee's already tight spending levels would be detrimental to the success of future legislation. I will continue to encourage my colleagues on the Budget Committee to set spending levels that do not harm programs important to the central coast.
- I recently [invited Congressman Rodney Davis](#) (R-IL) to my district to talk directly with producers. He is the Chairman of the Biotechnology, Horticulture, and Research subcommittee, so his support for our agriculture industry is critical. While here, Congressman Davis engaged with producers on mechanization, specialty crop innovation, and organics.



This is the third in a series of agriculture tours that I have hosted on the Central Coast for my fellow members of Congress, including [Ranking Member Sanford Bishop](#) (D-GA) of the House Appropriations Committee and [Ranking Member Collin Peterson](#) (D-MN) of the House Agriculture Committee.



- The House Organic Agriculture Research Act, [which I coauthored](#), just got a companion bill in the Senate! The bill will reauthorize the Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative (OREI) for five years and increase annual funding from \$20 million to \$50 million. Senator Susan Collins (R-ME) and Senator Bob Casey (D-PA) joined together to introduce our bill in the Senate. This bipartisan and bicameral introduction demonstrates the broad support for organic agriculture on Capitol Hill.
- This month, I had the opportunity to engage with Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue and his staff at the USDA. [During a House Agriculture Committee hearing](#), I questioned Secretary Perdue on his efforts to streamline the H-2A program and stressed the need for improvements.

Secretary Perdue also visited our district during a tour of central California. Though I was in Washington for votes, my district staff met with him for a farm tour and dinner, using the opportunity to discuss labor, trade, and mechanization needs.



As I work on the 2018 Farm Bill, I want to hear from you. Please call or contact me at my Congressional offices in Salinas, Santa Cruz, or Washington, D.C. or through <https://panetta.house.gov>. Please do not hesitate to reach out and let us know how I can be of service to you.

Sincerely,

JIMMY PANETTA
Member of Congress